Monongalia Mirror

A Family Newspaper---Independent of Party or Sect.

☞News, Literature, Agriculture, and Morality.

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A Sketch from Rural Life.

THE RED EAR:

Or, the Husking Frolic.

BY T. S. ARTHUR.

In rural districts, the merrymakings have a natural heartiness about them never seen in the cities, towns, nor villages. Overweening self-respect has not come in to fetter the motions of the body, nor to smother the laugh in its free utterance. Feeling and action are in close relationship. You come nearer to nature, untrammeled by custom and unaffected by art.

A merrymaking *par excellence* is a New England husking frolic. The husking frolic at the South is a different affair altogether. There, it is a congregation of negroes from the various plantations near at hand, who, while they work, make the air vocal almost for miles around with their rude melodies, a few of which have been rendered familiar to ears polite by the 'Serenaders' who have highly amused the public during the past two years. But at the North the 'husking' like the 'quilting' draws together the gentle maidens and loving swains of a neighborhood, who meet to enjoy themselves in their own way. And such enjoyment as they have, in kind and degree, is not to be met with every day. In former times the 'husking' was a wilder affair than at present. Straight-laced conventionality is gradually finding its way beyond the city limits, and binding the free spirits of our country maidens. They meet oftener with the city folks, gradually falling more and more into their habits as they partake more and more of their spirit; and when they assemble for enjoyment, they check their impulses, restrain their movements, and hush almost into silence the merry laughter that seeks to leap forth like the singing waters of the fountain.—No; 'huskings' are not what they were. Instead of seeing on the threshing floor a band of young men and maidens, stripping from the bright ears of grain their leafy covering, amid laughter, music, and mingling of sweet voices, as of old, mere labor comes in too often to perform the service, and silently and coldly does the work. Yet, here and there, a farmer, who cannot forget the pleasant times when he was young, sends forth his annual summons, after the maize harvest is gathered, and then comes a merrymaking for old and young that is enjoyed in a way never to be forgotten.

Old Ephraim Bradley was one of this school. If his head grew white under the falling snows of many winters, the grass was fresh and green and the flowers ever blooming on his heart. With him the annual "husking" was never omitted. It was like Christmas and Thanksgiving, almost a sacred thing, half invoking sin in its omission.

Kate Mayflower, a wild romp of a girl from Boston—at least some in the city regarded her as such—was spending a few weeks in D——, when invitations came to attend a husking party at Ephraim Bradley's. The old man lived some three miles from the village. Kate had heard about husking parties, and her young spirits leaped up when the announcement was made that one was to be held in the neighborhood, and that she was to be present. It was a frolic that, from all she had heard, would just suit her temperament, and she set off, when the time came, to make one of a party, in the merriest possible mood.

Evening had closed in on an arrival of the party from D——, who quickly filled some score or two of young people in a large kitchen, where lay heaped up in the centre a large pile of Indian corn.

'All that to be husked?' whispered Kate, as she entered the room.

'O, yes! all that and more, perhaps,' was the reply, 'We have come to work, you know.'

'Now, gals,' said Old Mr. Bradley, who stood looking as the young folks gathered, with bright faces around the golden grain, 'now for a good old fashioned time. If there isn't half a dozen weddings between this and Christmas, I shall say there is no virtue in red ears.'

As he ceased, down dropped, amid gay voices and laughter, the whole company upon the floor in all sorts of graceful and ungraceful positions, in a circle around the pile of corn.—Kate alone remained standing, for the movement was so sudden that she could not act with it.

'Here's room for you, Kate,' cried one of the girls who had come with her, making a place by her side, and down sank Kate, feeling for the first time a little awkward and confused. Beside her was a stout country youth whose face was all merriment, and whose eyes were dancing with anticipated pleasure. The city girl eyed his rough brown hands, coarse garments and unpolished face with a slight feeling of repulsion, and drew a little from him towards her friend.

'O, plenty of room,' said he, turning broadly around and addressing her with a familiar leer,—'The tighter we fit in, the better. Lay the brands close if you want a good fire.'

Kate could not help laughing at this. As she laughed he added—

"All free and easy here."

He had grasped an ear of corn, and was already stripping down the husk.

"A RED EAR, by *jingo*!" suddenly burst from his lips, in a tone of triumph, and as he spoke, he sprang towards, or rather upon Kate, with the grace of a young bear, and kissed her with a "smack" that might have been heard a dozen rooms off. Ere she had time to recover from the surprise, and, it must be admitted, indignation, occasioned by this unexpected assault upon her lips, the hero of the first "RED EAR" was half around the circle of struggling girls, kissing both right and left with a skill and heartiness that awoke shouts of applause from the young 'fellers' who envied his good fortune.

That was a new phase in the life of Kate. She had heard of kissing as an amusement among young folks, and had often thought that the custom was to become obsolete; but a practical view, and a personal participation like this was a thing that her imagination had, in none of its vagaries, conceived. An old fashioned, straight-backed, flag-bottomed chair stood near and, unwilling to thrust herself again upon the floor, Kate drew that into the circle, and seated herself close to the pile of corn just as the young man had completed his task of kissing every one in the room.

"First rate, that!" said he, smacking his lips, as he threw himself at her feet. "Wasn't I lucky!"

Kate's indignation had by this time, all melted away under a lively sense of the ludicrous, and she could not help laughing with the merriest.—Soon another red ear was announced, and then the kissing commenced again. Such struggling, wrestling, screaming, and laughing, Kate had never heard nor seen. The young man who held the prize, had all the nerve required to go through with his part, as Kate clearly proved when it came to her turn to receive a salute. The struggle was long and well sustained on the part of the maiden; but her fate was to be kissed by a rough countryman whom she had never met before. The deed was done, and then the blushing, panting girl, was led back in triumph to the room from which she had escaped.

Red ears were in plenty that evening. It was shrewdly guessed that every young man had come with at least two in his pockets, for the girls avowed that never before had farmer Bradley's field of corn produced so many. As for Kate, she was kissed and kissed, until—as she alleged to her friend—making a virtue of necessity, she submitted with the kindliest grace imaginable; and if the truth must be told, enjoying the frolic with as lively a zest as any one present.

At length the great pile of corn disappeared, and the company arranged themselves for dancing; but they had hardly been on the floor half an hour when supper was announced—and such a supper as it was! No pyramids of ice-cream or candied oranges. No mock nor real turtle; nor oysters in dozen styles. Turkeys were there, but not scientifically 'boned.' No; there were none of the fashionable city delicacies; but instead a gigantic round of beef in the centre of the table was flanked on either side with vegetables. A bouncing junk of corned beef was at one end, and a big chicken pie at the other. An Indian pudding, of ample dimensions, stood forth between the middle and end dishes, and a giant pot of beans loomed up on the other side; while pumpkin pies, apple sauce, and a host of other 'fixings' filled up the spaces.

This was the bill of fare for the evening, and our city belle looked on with a new surprise as she saw the articles disappearing one after another, like frost on window panes at sunrise. If the good wife did not say on this, as was said on similar occasions, "Lay hold, and help yourselves, gals—make a long arm and let the men folks take keer of themselves. If any on you like turnips *squat* and buttered, *squat* and butter 'em to suit yourselves"—at least as hearty and primitive an invitation to go to work on the good things was extended, and no one could complain that it was not acted upon.—What followed is best given in the language of one who has already described a similar scene.

"The guests seemed to do ample justice to the viands; mirth and festivity reigned around the board.—Jokes, witticisms, and flashes of fun would occasionally "set the tables in a roar." All appeared determined to enjoy themselves at the "top of their bent."

"Soon as the supper was over all the girls lent a hand, and the table was cleared away in a jiffy. Blindman's buff was next introduced, the company now was uproarious! Dancing was the next consideration. Amos Bunker screwed up his viol, rosined the bow, and 'did up' the toe and heel-in-spring notes of Fisher's Hornpipe, while a number of the party, who were somewhat skilled in the Terpsictorean art, put in the 'double-shuffle rigadoon.' Presently the lookers-on caught the enthusiasm, and the whole company, old and young, adepts and novices, took the floor and did their utmost.

'Twas right and left, and down outside, six round and back to back:
Harum-skarum, helter-skelter, bump together whack!

"And thus was the husking kept up till the old clock, which stood in one corner of the kitchen, beat out twelve; then broke up the jolly gathering."

So it was at old farmer Bradley's. When Kate went back to Boston, she was free that she had enjoyed a new kind of merrymaking, and avowed her determination to be at old Ephraim Bradley's when the next "husking" came off.

Religion at the West.

The progress of religion at the West (says the Rev. J. F. Tuttle) has been of itself a prodigy. The first sermon preached to the white people in the North-western Territory was by a Mr. Breck, on the 20th of July, 1788, in the Block House, at Marietta. But now, in 1852, not less than six hundred Presbyterian and Congregational ministers hold forth the word of life in Ohio alone, to some seven hundred congregations. In 1820, two years before the State was admitted into the Union, there were probably not half a dozen ministers in Indiana; now there are more than 200 ministers and 300 churches of these denominations, the most of which are the nurslings of Home Missions. In 1814, as far as I can ascertain, there was not a Presbyterian or Congregational church or minister in Illinois.—In 1829, the first Presbytery was formed of seven members; and on the Mississippi, above St. Louis, there was not a single minister or church, nor one within 200 miles in any direction of Galena, where Kent, the veteran pioneer of the A. H. M. S. had just been stationed. But now there are more than 250 churches on the same field, and the Gospel is preached to listening thousands. In 1829, Mr. Kent visited Wisconsin, and tells us that, losing his way, he was led to the cabin of a backsliding Englishman, who had been converted in Calcutta. There was not to his knowledge, a man within twenty miles who could pray with him, nor an evangelical Christian church within 200 miles. In 1835, the work of Home Missions began in earnest in Wisconsin; and now it has some 200 churches, and 150 ministers.

FAULTS OF ELOCUTION.

The Rev. Jacob Gruber, well known as an eccentric but very useful minister of the Methodist E. Church, desiring to correct an error in the elocution of one of his young brethren, much given to the melodious termination of each sentence with an emphatic "ah," wrote the following letter to him:

"*Dear-ah Brother-ah!*—When-ah you-ah go-ah to-ah preach-ah, take-ah care-ah you-ah don't-ah say-ah AH! AH! Yours-ah,

JACOB-AH GRUBER-AH."

The Great Destroyer.—At a temperance mass meeting held in New Jersey, last week, William Edmonds, Esq., keeper of the New York city prison, who was one of the speakers, stated, *that during the last two years, forty-three thousand human beings had been confined at the Tombs*, and of this large number, not over one hundred had been confined in the prison in that time, without the *immediate* or first *cause* of their imprisonment could be ascribed to the *intoxicating* bowl.

It is calculated that East Brooklyn raises about forty wagon-loads of white headed children to the acre—besides a considerable few of red-top!

POETRY.

SNOW.

BY MRS. SIGOURNEY.

All quietly the snow comes down,
When we are fast asleep.
And plays a thousand fairy pranks
O'er vale and mountain steep.
So cunningly it finds its way
To every cranny small,
And creeps thro' e'en the slightest chink
In window or in wall.

To every noteless hill it brings
A fairer, purer crest,
Than the rich ermine robe that decks
The haughtiest monarch's breast.
To every reaching spray it gives
Whate'er its hand can hold,—
A beauteous thing the snow is
To all, both young and old.

The waking day, thro' curtaining haze,
Looks forth, with sore surprise,
To view what changes have been wro't
Since last she shut her eyes;
And a pleasant thing it is to see
The cottage children peep
From out the drift that to their eaves
Prolongs it, rampart deep.

The patient farmer searches
His buried lambs to find,
And dig his silly poultry out,
Who clamor in the wind.
How sturdily he cuts his way,
Though wild blasts beat him back,
And caters for his waiting herd,
Who shiver round his stack.

Right welcome are those feathery flakes
To the ruddy urchins' eye,
As down the long smooth hill they slide
With shout and revelry.
Or when the moonlight clear and cold,
Calls out the throng to play,
Oh! a merry gift the snow is
For a Christmas holiday.

The city Miss, who wrapped in fur,
Is lifted to the sleigh,
And borne so daintily to school,
Along the crowded way,
Feels not within her pallid cheek
The rich blood mantling warm,
Like her, who laughing, shakes the snow
From [illegible]

A tasteful hand the snow hath,
For, on the storied pane,
I saw the Alpine landscape traced
With arch and sculptured fane.
Where high o'er hoary headed cliffs,
The dizzy Simplon wound,
And old cathedrals reared their towers
With Gothic tracery bound.

I think it hath a tender heart.
For I marked it while it crept
To spread a sheltering mantle, where
The infant blossom slept.
It doth to earth a deed of love—
Though in a wintry way,
And her turf-gown will be greener,
For the snow that falls to-day.

☞The following lines, which we have received from an unknown Correspondent, with the request, "*Please Print*," are inserted immediately below the above beautiful effusion by *Mrs. Sigourney*, to show our readers (and the writer, too, if he pleases) the difference between *genuine poetry* and *juvenile verses*:—[EDS. MIRROR.

WINTER.

Original by A. B. F.

The cold winter storms are stealing o'er us—
The chilly nights are drawing round,
The little birds have stop'd their chorus,
And nothing is heard but the cold mourning sound.

All nature is hid with the white frosty cover,
That the clouds have sent down upon earth,
And around the warm fire-hearth the little ones hover,
Stop'd by the winter from their joyful mirth.

The green pretty coats are strip'd from the trees,
The grass no longer retains its green glow,
And instead of the warm summer breeze,
The cold freezing winter blasts blow.

Cold frost has cover'd the creeks and the rills,
With his hard icy coat of mail,
And the snow has not failed to cover the hills,
And also has sunk in the dale.

But all of the pleasures are not taken away,
When the weather gets dreary and cold,
And to some "December's as pleasant as May,"
When the earth is cover'd with winter's white fold.

To the belle the sleigh is a source of delight,
When good sleighing is there for the sleigh;
She then makes use of the cold dreary nights,
As well as the dark gloomy day.

The school-boy, when all other pleasures seem fled,
And no summer is nigh him to cheer,
He siezes with pleasure his smooth running sled,
And the snow balls fly thick round his ear.

THE CHINESE.

One of our Missionaries in China furnishes the following interesting remarks touching the condition and future prospects of the long-secluded and singular people whose millions throng the "Celestial Empire."

The Chinese are a singular people, and equally interesting; I am very much prepossessed in their favour.—They are certainly very industrious, capable, and polite in their way. I do hope and pray that they may soon be converted to God. I think the leaven of truth is spreading silently though powerfully among them. Ere long they will be given to the Lord as a part of his purchased possessions. There are several causes operating upon them at this time, which are calculated in their nature to bring about a change in their religion, their customs, and perhaps in their government. Among these may be mentioned the direct influence of the missionaries and their books, the increase of commerce, and the price of labor in the open ports. The Chinese in and around these ports, who have become informed of the price of labor in California and other parts of the world, are beginning to emigrate by thousands, and those from the interior are coming in in search of better wages; thus an outlet is formed, and a spirit of enterprise excited among them; the very thing they need.—They have been shut up within themselves so long that they have become [illegible] before we can reasonably expect to see much fruit from evangelical labors.

Carrying Chinese to California, is as much a matter of speculation among the shipmen as carrying tea or anything else. They labor here at from five to fifteen cents a day, and find themselves. They have learned at last that there is better living abroad, and they are discontented with their present condition. Ships cannot be procured fast enough to take them to the "Golden Hills," as they call California. Twenty-four ships were taking in emigrants at Hong Kong the last accounts I noticed. Where is this to end? What results will be effected by it? These are questions too hard for us to solve. They will certainly not all stop on our Pacific coast. The South may look out for them by ship-loads. I shall not be surprised if Chinese labor supplants slave labor in the South, and that before a great while. Shall I give you my reasons for believing that such will be the fact? I would willingly do so now, but I have written too long on this subject already. I am also very much fatigued from writing other letters. Some future time I will take up the subject again, and then I will know more about it than I do now.

California-bound Chinamen.

Under date of Hong Kong, April 22, Mr. Dean, the Baptist missionary, writes as follows:—

"The topic which, more than all others, engrosses the Chinese in the neighborhood, at present, is the emigration to the gold hills of California. A dozen ships are now taken up, and *twenty more* are advertised here and at Whampoa for this purpose, and each is to take from two hundred to five hundred Chinese emigrants to San Francisco; and, as if it were not enough to send wooden houses, they are now building stone houses, cutting the granite into blocks and pillars, that the buildings may there be put together, like Solomon's temple, without the sound of the hammer."

The African slave trade with Brazil being extinct, there remain but the Spanish West Indies as a market for slaves. In these the foreign slave trade is also against the laws of Spain, but Spanish officials allow it to be carried on in a contraband manner, as they receive large sums of money thereby.

Snuff and its Manufacture.

In England there are pestle mills; these which have pestles receive a motion by machinery and grind up the tobacco (which is quite dry for this operation) into fine snuff, like grinding any substance with a pestle in a mortar. The pestal is of iron, and the mortar wood, but this snuff is first ground coarse under horizontal millstones; it is much prized for its particular grain by some connoisseur snuff-takers. Snuff can be colored with log-wood and scented with various kinds of oils. There are particular mixtures for different snuffers; some like one kind and some another. The famous Lundy-foot Irish snuff was made out of dried tobacco which was suppose to be over-dried—too much roasted. It was the means however of making the fortune of its Dublin manufacturer. No less than 37,422 lbs. of snuff were exported from the United States last year; but the home consumption is far greater than this; more is manufactured, we believe, by a single firm in this city, that of Lorillard, the oldest snuff-making house in the United States, it having manufactured snuff before the revolution.

There are few Americans, as we said *before*, who take snuff, but many Germans and Frenchmen in the United States use it. Different kinds are manufactured, such as Macaboy, Rappee, Lundy-foot, and Scotch snuff. More of the latter is used than any other, not for snuffing, but for other purposes. In some of our southern States the females use the scotch snuff to clean their teeth, and excite their gums after meals by using the snuff along with a tooth stick. Tons of snuff are shipped from New York for North Carolina and Georgia to be used for this purpose. This snuff is also extensively employed for destroying vermin on vines, plants, &c. It is very dry and fine, but how it came to get its name is a query. Perhaps it was the kind manufactured by Gilbert Staurt's father, the first snuff machine mechanic who erected snuff mills in the colonies, and who was engaged in Scotland to come here for that purpose. It is the general custom in Scotland to grind their snuff very dry, and the attendants on the mills have a most disagreeable and unhealthy avocation. At one time the Scotch Highlanders were represented to be great snuffers, and it may be that [illegible] see, who made their own snuff in their own mills, by drying the tobacco leaves, and then rubbing them to powder between his hands—real Lundy-foot—gave it the name which it now retains, but which is unknown as a *snuff-taking snuff* in Scotland at the present day, where there are ten smokers to one snuffer.

There are large snuff manufactories in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and some other places, as well as New York, but we have not been able to obtain a correct account of the amount manufactured yearly. We have received such information, however, as makes us distrust all published statistics, they come far short of the mark in giving the quantities Any mill capable of grinding up tobacco leaves into powder is capable of making snuff. The color to any degree of darkness after the tobacco is ground is given by moistening it with a weak solution of the sulphate of iron, and then stirring it up well and adding logwood liquor until it is of the desired shade. Tonca beans and odoriferous oils are employed to scent some snuffs, but such oils are not safe to use, they affect the brain and often produce vertigo. Lundy-foot is the safest snuff to use, because almost, if not all the nicotine is expelled by the partial roasting of the leaves. Snuffing, however, is a queer custom when a person reflects upon it, but not more so than smoking.

An auctioneer was selling a lot of land for agricultural purposes. 'Gentlemen,' said he, 'this is the most delightful land. It is the easiest land to cultivate in Massachusetts—it is so light—so very light. Mr. Parker, here, will corroborate my statement—he owns the next patch, and he will tell you how easy it is worked.'

'Yes, gentlemen,' said Mr. Parker, 'it is very easy to work it, but it's a plaguy sight easier to gather the crop.'

The editor of a western paper having lent his axe to one of his subscribers, the borrower unfortunately broke off the handle. On returning it the man said, "You can easily fix it."

"Yes," replied the owner, "but that will cost a quarter of a dollar."

"Well! if you ain't rather small for an editor! Here's the quarter—but I'll thank you just to stop my paper at once."

A young lady in the interior thinks of going to California to get married, for the reason that she has been told in that country the men folks "rock the cradle."

Those who give to God only the shadow of duty, can never expect from him a real reward.

Blessed are they that Mourn.

BY WM. C. BRYANT.

O! deem not they are blest alone
Whose lives a peaceful tenor keep;
The Power who pities man, has sown
A blessing for the eyes that weep.

The light of smiles shall fill again
The lids that overflow with tears;
And weary hours of woe and pain
Are promises of happy years.

There is a day of sunny rest
For every dark and troubled night;
And grief may bide an evening guest,
But joy shall come with early light.

And thou, who o'er thy friend's low bier
Sheddest the bitter drops like rain,
Hope that a brighter, happier sphere
Will give him to thy arms again.

Nor let the good man's trust depart,
Though life its common gifts deny;
Though pierced and broken be his heart,
And, spurned of men, he goes to die—

For God has marked each sorrowing day
And numbered every secret tear;
And heaven's long age of bliss shall pay
For all its children suffer here.

Political Contests and Death.

THE HON. T. H. BENTON delivered a speech of congratulation since his election to Congress, in which he made the following allusions to his own feelings, and circumstances, during the contest:—

I have been through a contest to which I had no heart, and into which I have been forced sorely against my will. I have not conducted it like other men. Who, since it began, has seen me walk the streets of the city in which I live? stand at the corner? or visit a public place? Who has seen that? No one. Who has seen me talk to any individual to conciliate his vote? No one. What have I done? Gone forth when too much assailed to speak to the masses—those masses always honest, sometimes mistaken, but always ready to do justice. I have spoken the same language to all kindly and deferentially to the good and mistaken—[illegible] and from the masses, and the repulse of assailants, I have always returned to the seclusion of my own house. My work has been that of a sick lion—sick at heart—reposing in his lair, only leaving it when the hunters and their pack bayed too closely; and then to slaughter or disperse the assailants; and then return again to the sick bed.

"I have gone through a contest to which I had no heart, and into which I was forced by combinations against life and honor, and from which I gladly escape. What is a seat in Congress to me? I have sat thirty years in the highest branch of Congress—have made a name to which I can expect to add nothing—and I should only be anxious to save what has been gained. I have domestic affections, sorely lacerated in these latter times: a wife whom I have never neglected, and who needs my attentions now more than ever—children, some separated from me by the wide expanse of oceans and continents, others by the slender bounds which separate time from eternity. I touch the age which the Psalmist assigns for the limit of manly life; and must be thoughtless indeed if I do not think something beyond the fleeting and shadowy pursuits of this life, of all which I have seen the vanity. What is my occupation? ask the undertaker, that good Mr. Lynch, whose face, present on so many mournful occasions, has become pleasant to me. He knows what occupies my thoughts and cares—gathering the bones of the dead—a mother—a sister—two sons—a grand child—planting the cypress over the assembled graves, and marking the spot where I, and those dear to me are soon to be laid, all on the sunset of the Father of Floods, the towering city of St. Louis on one hand, and the rolling stream of the Missouri on the other; and where a cemetery of large dimensions is to be the future necropolis of unnumbered generations. These are my thoughts and cares, and the undertaker knows them.

"I have been recluse for many months, and was called proud, because I was so. If by that term it was intended to say I had the vulgar pride which treats with contumely honesty in rags, it is false: if that lofty pride is intended which despises meanness though plated with gold, it is true. I have that pride. I never saw the poor honest man, that I did not respect; nor the rich mean one that I did not despise. Of that kind of pride I have some, something from it to be proud of within myself, and more to be proud of from the people."

Punch says that a man who goes to church to chew tobacco, and spit upon the floor, ought to be taken by the head and heels and scrubbed over the soiled spot until it is clean.